



Florida House of Representatives

Will Weatherford

Representative, District 61

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CLASS SIZE FLEXIBILITY PASSES HOUSE

~Weatherford's Resolution May Come Before Voters in 2010~

TALLAHASSEE – Legislation giving Florida voters the opportunity to support a common-sense revision to the Class Size Amendment that will keep class sizes small in Florida and give principals and teachers needed flexibility was approved by the Florida House today. House Joint Resolution (HJR) 919, sponsored by Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), preserves the constitutional integrity of the Class Size Amendment approved by Florida voters in 2002 by holding class size measurement at the school average level with limits on individual classroom sizes.

"Over the last few years, class sizes in Florida have decreased dramatically," said Representative Weatherford. "But if we want to continue to make small classes a priority, we have to provide a commonsense fix so that our children can continue to benefit from smaller classes while at the same time giving our principals and teachers the flexibility they need to keep our education focus on the classroom."

In November 2002, Florida voters approved the constitutional Class Size Amendment, creating a maximum number of students that can be in core-curriculum classes in Florida schools. Since 2002, the Legislature has provided \$13 billion for class size reduction, primarily spent building new classrooms and schools and hiring new teachers. Since the 2002-03 school year, the average size of classes for grades PreK-3 has declined by 7.1 students, for grades 4-8 by 5.55 students; and for high school by 2.78 students.

The provisions of the Class Size Amendment have been phased in gradually, with school districts required to meet the class size caps at the school-wide average this year and required to meet new class size caps in each classroom in the 2010-11 school year. Although almost all schools in Florida have been able to meet the school-wide average requirements, the inflexible nature of strictly measuring class size at the classroom level has the potential to create school management problems, as new classes would have to be created and students moved to accommodate for mid-year moves and changes. Without the solution provided in HJR 919, the flexibility principals have in managing their schools will decrease, as they will no longer have the option to put students that need a little extra attention in a slightly smaller class, while compensating with a slightly larger class.

The Senate companion for HJR 919 is Senate Joint Resolution 1828 sponsored by Representative Stephen Wise (R-Jacksonville). If approved by the Senate, Florida voters will have the opportunity to vote on this proposed constitutional amendment in the 2010 general election.

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